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Statement submitted by CLIPSAS, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Over the past 50 years, humans have multiplied - their population, physical possessions, the flow of merchandises and energy they use. But, if growth solved some problems, it can create others. Our economies are over dependent on fossil energies.

Our species' whole recorded history has taken place in the Holocene stretching back 10,000 years. But our collective actions have brought us into uncharted territory in less than 250 years! The very new Anthropocene epoch began when industrial revolution has had a significant global impact on the Earth's ecosystems.

Since the 1970s, the crisis is regularly at the center of all policies. The latest consequences of neoliberalism lead to austerity plans that reinforce social inequities. 'Sustainable degrowth' is as a way out of social, economic and ecological crisis affecting our societies.

Sustainable development does not call into question the principle of economic growth and maintains the hope to reconcile capitalist accumulation, social justice and planet preservation. Unfortunately since the 70s, the Western model of society is unbearable as such; it is urgent to stop trying to export it to the rest of the world.

In addition, the technological options do get into a terribly uncertain territory. The end of the industrial era may be delayed as a result of technological change, but the technological miracle probably will not happen.

And finally, thanks to the transhumanism, the reinvented man would be able to survive in a polluted and socially, environmentally degraded world. But ethical and moral prudence remains widely questioned by an approach leading humanity into unknown and dangerous territories.

Sustainable degrowth means a tool of imaginary decolonization. This term, as opposed to 'sustainable development', is not recoverable, and not reusable by the society of growth.

Temporary, the word 'degrowth' will persist as long as the religion of growth will continue to exist. 'Degrowth' is the word given to the transition from a society of growth, to a society without growth.

Talking about sustainable degrowth allows us to denounce the inconsistencies of growth. That does not mean any negative growth, but an absence of growth. A slowdown in the 1/5th of humanity which consumes 4/5th of resources is necessary to enable an acceleration of the other 4/5th of humanity.

The desire to preserve 'the love of the world' is questioning the anthropocentric characteristic of Western modernity.

A chosen sustainable degrowth, instead of an imposed negative growth revisits the notion of progress in order to allow a sustainable development that contributes to a sense of social solidarity.